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From: Foureau, Annaise (EHS) <annaise.foureau@massmail.state.ma.us>
Sent: Friday, June 10, 2011 12:56 PM
To: Hanchett, James (DPH)
Subject: Message from Secretary Bigby

Dear EOHHS Community,

Last Wednesday Massachusetts experienced an extraordinary event that left some people in the Commonwealth in tragic situations. The tornadoes that stormed through Western and Central Massachusetts left some families facing the deaths of loved ones, hundreds of people homeless, and some communities without their local town hall, church, or school. My thoughts are with all the families who have been impacted by the tornadoes.

Shortly after we learned about the tornadoes we began to mobilize our agencies to respond to the diverse needs of the communities. Governor Patrick requested that all state agencies coordinate their efforts to establish emergency response centers. By Friday afternoon three centers opened in Springfield, Palmer, and Southbridge with representatives from EOHHS, EOLWD, EOHED, co-located in space provided by EOHHS.

Workers came in on Saturday and Sunday and served hundreds of people. Staff from as far away as New Bedford and Cambridge traveled to the centers to help. Counselors from DMH have been on site in the centers and at shelters to provide counseling. The laundry staff at Monson accepted bags of clothing that victims recovered from their homes and sorted through the clothes to remove glass and other debris before they washed and folded the laundry for families to pick up. Monson also offered space in which Red Cross could set up a shelter, if needed and identified space that can provide extended temporary housing for community members and gave families access to the showers at the rec building. DTA workers helped people get replacement SNAP benefits and wrote down questions when they couldn't provide immediate answers and called individuals on their cell phones after they learned the answers. These are just a few of the examples of how people pulled together to help out.

I visited all the response centers this week and I am proud of the effort that so many staff made to respond to the needs of individuals who presented for assistance, going above and beyond the call of duty. I want to acknowledge some people in particular. Commissioner Julia Kehoe and Commissioner Elin Howe made sure that we had locations for the response centers so that they were up and running last Friday. I want to thank Claudette Champagne, Director and Nathan Skrocki, Assistant Director from the Liberty St. DTA office in Springfield, Roxanne Smith-Miller, Director of DTA in Southbridge, John Shirley, DTA Regional Director for Greater Boston for covering the Southbridge center, and Mike Longley Assistant Director from the Holyoke DTA office and Melissa Pietraszkiewicz, Acting Director for State Street Springfield office for covering the response center at the Monson Developmental Center. I would like to thank David Serra, Director of the Monson Developmental Center. I also want to thank Laurie Roberts, Michelle Harris, Terry O'Hare and all the other staff from Monson. I would also like to acknowledge Rehabilitative Resources, Inc., a DDS provider, that has provided van transportation services to and from the Monson emergency center.

I know that there are many more people who are part of the effort to respond to the tornadoes. I hope all of EOHHS will join me in thanking you for your hard work and commitment.

JudyAnn Bigby, M.D.
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